



RICH NOLAN
President & CEO

May 24, 2022

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

On behalf of the National Mining Association (NMA), I would like to express our strong and continued opposition to the Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act (H.R. 2794). This bill, and other legislative proposals that seek to restrict access to our nation's resources, is partially why the U.S. is 100 percent import-dependent for 17 key mineral resources and 50 percent or more import-dependent for an additional 30 minerals (29 of which are designated as "critical minerals").

Northern Minnesota is a place of tremendous natural beauty, and is also blessed with world-class mineral deposits containing copper, nickel and essential metals that are vital for renewable energy, vehicle electrification and other technologies that will help the U.S. achieve its climate goals. In fact, this area contains the largest undeveloped deposits of nickel, copper and platinum metals in the world. Despite these abundant resources, the U.S. is over 50 percent import reliant for nickel, 79 percent reliant for platinum, 76 percent reliant for cobalt and nearly 40 percent reliant for copper. In order to make better use of our domestic resources, the U.S. must increase support for responsible domestic mining projects.

Twin Metals has proposed to construct a mine entirely with union labor within the Duluth Complex in Northern Minnesota, an area well removed from the 1.5 million acres of protected national forest and wilderness. Unfortunately, H.R. 2794 would reinstate the politically motivated full-scale mineral withdrawal of nearly 240,000 acres that was initiated days before the Obama administration left office, reversed by the Trump administration and recently reinstated by the Biden administration, effectively curtailing future investment and mineral development on lands that Congress and the U.S. Forest Service expressly designated for mining and mineral development. This bill denies Northern Minnesota the opportunity to create thousands of high-paying jobs and prevents significant revenues, in the form of taxes and royalties, that support Minnesota rural communities, schools and regional development projects. It also arbitrarily forecloses evaluation of the project through the National Environmental Policy Act, Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and permitting processes that are designed to provide policymakers with the data required to make informed and transparent decisions.

We are entering the most mineral- and metal-intensive era in history and goals for infrastructure, new technologies and electrification hinge on a reliable and abundant supply of minerals. The Biden administration's own supply chain assessment, released nearly a year ago, correctly

found that “the United States must secure reliable and sustainable supplies of critical minerals and metals to ensure resilience across U.S. manufacturing and defense needs...”¹

Ongoing pandemic recovery, rising inflation, increasing energy costs, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and trade tensions with China, among other factors, have further exposed well-worn vulnerabilities in our supply chains. America’s growing reliance on foreign sources of metals and minerals is unsustainable and puts our nation at a strategic disadvantage, jeopardizing our ability to compete on a global scale.

Voters are increasingly concerned about these alarming trends and want action. A recent poll conducted by Morning Consult showed that 74 percent of Americans support U.S. action to encourage the use of domestically-mined minerals to decrease reliance on imported minerals. This demonstrates the overwhelming need to support a domestic mineral supply chain for manufacturing, infrastructure, advanced energy technologies, defense readiness and technological innovation.

Unfortunately, less than half of the mineral needs of U.S. manufacturing are currently met by domestically mined minerals. H.R. 2794 will only exacerbate this serious issue by limiting access to the very metals and minerals that are the foundation of our economic and national security. These minerals will need to come from somewhere and, as the home to world-class environmental and labor standards, sourcing them in the U.S. will ensure we need not choose between mining and environmental protection. The NMA and its members stand ready to work with you on public policies to help strengthen a reliable and stable domestic mineral supply chain.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rich Nolan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rich Nolan

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/100-day-supply-chain-review-report.pdf>